

A PLEA for PEACE and TRUTH:

O R,

*An Attempt to compose the Differences, subsisting in
some Dissenting-Congregations, upon the Principles
of the Gospel.*

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D to a divided

S O C I E T Y

O F

Protestant-Dissenters,

A T

R I N G W O O D in *Hampshire*,

November the First, 1748.

Occasioned by the *Death* of

Mr *Henry Meadows*, sen.

Published by REQUEST, with Additions.

By JOHN HORSEY of Warminster.

——— *Speaking the Truth in Love.* Ephes. iv. 15.

*Volumus & nos Pacem, & non solum volumus, sed & rogamus;
sed Pacem Christi, Pacem veram, Pacem sine Inimicitii, Pacem
in quâ non sit Bellum involutum, Pacem, quæ non ut Ad-ver-
sarios subjiciat, sed ut Amicos jungat.*

Hieron. Epist. ad Theoph.

L O N D O N

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TO THE
Protestant-Dissenters

Residing at, and near

R I N G W O O D.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers,

AS the Prepossessions of Mortals are very influential upon their Minds and Conduct, I am willing (if possible) to engage you to an *impartial* Perusal of the following Discourse, by assuring you, that it is not built upon Party-Principles,

The *DEDICATION*.

ples, or designed to blow up the Coals of Contention into a Flame, but rather to entinguish them. - - - - This important End, we have been professedly aiming at for Years past, but as yet, alas! in vain; and when the uniting Day will arrive, God only knows. 'Tis our Duty, however, to be found in the Use of Means, for we know not what Instrument the God of Love and Peace may own and bless in his pacific Attempts. But whatsoever Plans may be invented and pursued, *none* are (as I conceive) likely to prove successful, till *mutual* Affection prevails over Prejudice and Aversion. That Scheme seems most promising, which, without irritating Mens Passions against each other, refers every Man, rather to his own Irregularities than his Neighbours; directs him to abstain from his own Iniquity, and to try his Interest with the God of Peace, for public Good, by secret and fervent Prayer; and is calculated to destroy a narrow-spirited
and

The *DEDICATION*.

and selfish Behaviour, to produce also Enlargement of Soul, and true Catholicism : In a Word, that Scheme which tends most to incline Mens Hearts to God and one another, is the Scheme most worthy of your Embraces. Now, this is the Spirit which breathes thro' the following Sermon ; this is it's governing Aim. Here you'll find no bitter Invectives against particular Persons, yet sinful Actions are not spared ; all Blame and Censure however, is dispersed in a general Manner, and I wish the Spirit of God may teach People of both Sides of the Question, to apply it to their own Souls, so far as it is just. - - - Having the Testimony of my Conscience, as to the Uprightness of my Intentions, I recommend the following Pages to your careful Perusal, in your most calm and serious Moments, entreating that each of you, into whose Hands they may come, would earnestly pray, before and after reading, for the Blessing of God upon
this

The *DEDICATION*.

this healing Attempt. To conclude,
That the God of Love and Peace may
bless you, with Harmony and Felicity,
is the Desire and Prayer of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your sincere Friend,

and Humble Servant,

Warminster,
Nov. 24, 1748.



J. H.

That Part of the Word of God, which, at the *Desire* of the deceased, now calls for your serious Attention, may be found in

2 C O R. xiii. 11, and runs thus ;

Finally, Brethren farewell ; be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace ; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.

TH E several Organs of Mens Bodies, the Endowments of their Minds, together with their common Dependance, not only on God, but one another, plainly declare, that the great Author of their Being, designed them to act as sociable Creatures : And as the Fruit of the Intentions, and Disposals of Providence, Mankind, in general, proceed upon this Principle, *viz.* that two are better than one, or that a social, is preferable to a solitary Life ; hence human Creatures are branched out into natural, civil, and religious Communities. By a natural Society, I mean a private Family, whether large or small, or Persons allied to each other by Blood ; such as Parents and Children. By a civil Society, is commonly intended, a Collection of Men (whose Concern and Interest in

B

secular

2 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

secular Affairs being common) are united and incorporated under proper Bonds and Engagements, for mutual Prosperity and Safety. From the two preceding Communities, or, from Persons standing in the foregoing Relation, there happily springs a third, *viz.* a religious Society, which is a Collection of reasonable Creatures, assembled by mutual Consent, from a Sense of Duty and Obligation, to pay their joint Acknowledgements to their common Benefactor, to learn his Will in order to practise and submit to it; to implore also the several Blessings they want, either for Time or Eternity. Bodies of this Sort have been formed, amongst Heathens and Turks, Jews and Christians; but our Apostle directed this Epistle to a Society of Christians, professing Church-Order and Fellowship; amongst whom however, very unhappy Differences had sprung up^a, which He had endeavoured to compromise in his First Epistle; but those Attempts having proved ineffectual, he dispatched a second Letter (so much was his Heart fixed on their Tranquillity) on the same Errand, to apologize for some Parts of his first, and to press more earnestly and fully, some Points which had been but sparingly treated of before, to assure them also, that if He made them another Visit in Person, He would not spare their Irregularities; for by the Way, the Apostle was as zealous for Purity of Conversation, as for Purity of Doctrine, but He chose to *write* thus

^a 1 Cor. i. 11.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 3

thus freely, to prevent thereby, if possible, any Thing which might look like Severity, when He made his personal Appearance amongst them. Having thus endeavoured to secure their Esteem for himself, and thereby a more attentive Regard to his Letters, by softening some of the more harsh and keen Parts of his first, He takes his Leave of them for that Time with the Words of our Text, saying, *finally, Brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you,*—Where you find,

I. An *Apostolic Salutation*, viz. *finally Brethren farewell.*

II. A very *seasonable Exhortation*, viz. *be perfect, be of good Comfort, &c.*

III. An *encouraging Promise*, viz. *the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.*

As the several Heads of Discourse now laid down, will be resumed, let us briefly consider,

I. *1st*, The *Apostolic Salutation*; *finally Brethren farewell*; in which you will easily observe,

1st, The *endearing Title* he bestowed upon them, together with,

4 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

2dly, The generous Concern he had for them.
You have then in the Salutation,

1st, The *engaging Title* he conferred upon them; *Brethren*. There is in Reality, a firm Alliance and Relation, between all the Parties of the Church; viz. between Christ and Believers, between one Believer also and another; there is, I say, an *intimate Alliance between Christ and Believers*, for we are told ^b that *both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which Cause He is not ashamed to call them Brethren, saying, I will declare thy Name unto my Brethren*, nor are you left at a Loss, to account for this Relation, between Christ the Mediator, and his People, because it is presently added, ^c *forasmuch then as Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, He also himself likewise took Part of the same*: And as He is not ashamed of these his Relatives in Heaven, so neither did he disown the Relation upon Earth, for upon his Resurrection, he says, *go tell my Brethren that they go into Gallilee* ^d, and because they are Brethren, Believers are Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ. ^e And as Christ is related to all Believers, so *all Believers stand in a near Relation to one another*; for our Lord addressing himself to his Disciples says, ^f *all ye are Brethren*; a public Character or Office in the Church makes no Difference, for regenerate

^b Heb. ii. 11, 12.

^c Ver. 14.

^d Matth. xxviii. 10.

^e Rom. viii. 17.

^f Matth. xxiii. 8.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 5

rate Souls, whether in a public or private Capacity, have *all* the *same* heavenly Father ^g, are *all* begotten by the *same* incorruptible Seed of the Word ^h, *all* nourish'd by the *same* Food, viz. Christ, *whose Flesh is Meat indeed, and whose Blood is Drink indeed* ⁱ, and are *all* (by Virtue of Christ their Surety) entitled to the *same* Inheritance ^k, and may expect *resembling* Corrections ^l.

This Relation between Christ and Believers will be *acknowledged* at the last Day, in the Presence of God, Angels, and Men; for we are informed the King will then say to the Righteous, *inasmuch as ye have done it*, i. e. shewn Kindness, unto one of the least of these *my Brethren*, ye have done it unto me ^m. This is a desirable Acknowledgement indeed! and affords Matter for thankful Admiration.

And such a Measure of Faith and Love was given the Apostles, that in public Addresses, as well as private Conference, they commonly saluted their believing Fellow-Travellers, with the Title of *Brethren*.

We come now to consider,

2dly, The Apostles *generous Concern* for his *Corinthian Brethren*, as exprest, by the Word, *Farewel*; 'tis as if he said, " Tho' absent in
" Body, I am present in Mind, and earnestly
" desirous of your Welfare and Prosperity,
" and therefore agreeable to my Heart's Desire,
" my

^g 2 *Thef.* ii. 16. ^h 1 *Pet.* i. 23. ⁱ *John* vi. 55.
^l *Ephes.* i. 14. ^k *Psaln* lxxxix. 32. *Amos* iii. 2. ^m *Matth.*
xxv. 40.

6 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

“ my frequent and fervent Prayer to God for
 “ you, is, that you may be saved from all pre-
 “ judicial Changes and Trials here, and from
 “ the Miseries of an eternal Hell hereafter.”
 So much for the Salutation; which paves the
 Way to

II. The *seasonable Exhortation* contained in
 our Text; which, the Apostle has branch'd
 out, into four Particulars, pressing the *Corin-
 thians* first to Perfection, then to Resolution,
 next to Union, and he closes the Charge with
 Peace.

I. He exhorts them to *Perfection, be per-
 fect*. The Perfection here intended, may pos-
 sibly relate to their Perfection as a *Church*,
 rather than to the Perfection of every *particu-
 lar* Person's Graces, and may refer to the in-
 cestuous Person, whom, having testified his
 Repentance, the Apostle advises them to re-
 admit, to their Communion and Fellowship as
 a Church. This Interpretation seems the more
 probable, because the original Word, (*καταρ-
 τίσειτε*); as the Learned remark, has a Refe-
 rence to the setting a broken Bone, or restor-
 ing a Bone out of Joint to it's proper Place ⁿ.
 And according to this Construction, 'tis as if
 He had said, “ Brethren, let none of your
 “ Fellow-

ⁿ See Pool's Annotat. in Loc. — *καταρτίζω luxata Membra
 in suum Locum restituere. Vid. Leigh's Crit. Sacr. — In Gal. vi.
 1, you have the same Verb, on which Place a celebrated Critick has
 these Words, Nitimini eum quasi Membrum Lapsu suo luxatum, &
 a Compage Corporis sejunctum, suo Loco reponere, & adaptanda
 rursus compingere. Vid. Poli Syn. in Loc.*

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 7

“ Fellow-Members remain banish’d from their
“ usual Places, and Offices in the Church, but
“ endeavour by soft and engaging Methods to
“ melt the hardened, and reclaim the Wan-
“ derer; do your utmost, to comfort them
“ that are of a sorrowful Spirit, and to
“ strengthen the Things that remain which
“ are ready to die; with chearful Hearts, and
“ open Arms, receive and embrace the re-
“ turning Penitent, whose Backslidings God
“ has mercifully healed.” We shall advance
now, to the next Branch of Exhortation,
which has a Respect,

2dly, To Resolution; be of good Comfort,
i. e. tho’ your intestine Divisions are in them-
selves perplexing, and very grievous to be
borne, and tho’ Contempt, Opposition, and
Persecution from Abroad, are very threatning,
discouraging, and formidable; yet bear these
Crosses with Courage, and Constancy, endure
these Hardships like good, bold, heroic, and
resolute Soldiers of Christ Jesus: Don’t faint
under your present, or expected Burdens, but
bear up under all the Reproaches you meet
with for Christ Sake, with Joy and Magnani-
mity. For Reproach of this Sort, is your dis-
tinguishing Glory. *All are not like you, dig-
nified with suffering for Christ, tho’ adorn’d
with Faith, But unto you it is given, in the
Behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but
also to suffer for his Sake °.* Nor should you
be terrified or disheartened, in Prospect of such
Suffering,

° *Philip. i. 29.*

8 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

Suffering, for the Blessing of God commonly goes along with it; for it's written, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; and again, *Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake. Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven* [†]. But the Apostle further exhorts his Corinthian Brethren,

3dly, To Union; be of one Mind, q. d.
 “ Labour to harmonize in Judgment as to all
 “ important and interesting Points, in all the
 “ weightier Matters of the Law or Gospel.
 “ I cannot indeed press you, to Agreement in
 “ Thought, as to every *Punctilio*; since, a-
 “ mong Mortals of different Complexions
 “ and Capacities, and whose Educations, Op-
 “ portunities, and Privileges, have been dif-
 “ ferent; a Diversity in Sentiment is almost
 “ necessary.” This seems to be the Apostle's
 Meaning in his Exhortation to Union, for
 he allows of, or bears with, Difference in
 Opinion, as to Things in themselves indif-
 ferent, such as Meats and Day [‡], enjoining
 them however, to guard against a wavering
 and censorious Spirit, saying, *Let every Man
 be fully persuaded in his own Mind, and let
 us not judge one another* [‡]. We come now
 to the last Part of the Exhortation, in which
 the Apostle prompts them.

4thly,

[†] *Matth.* v. 10, 11, 12. [‡] *Rom.* xiv. 2, 5. [‡] *Rom.* xiv. 5, 13.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 9

4thly, To Peace; live in Peace. Altho' the Exhortation to *Union* just dispatched may at first Sight appear to signify the same with what is now under Consideration; yet perhaps there is as much Difference between the two Pieces of Advice, as there is between the *Principle*, from whence an Action flows, and the *Action itself*; Peradventure then, by *Oneness of Mind*, the Apostle intends the *Principle of Conversation*. And by *Peace*, the *Conversation itself*. "Labour then, as if He
" had said, after a peaceable Behaviour as well
" as Agreement in Sentiment, let not your
" Lives be spotted with any Thing, that's forbidding, or morose; let Courtesy, Affability, Meekness, and Forbearance, beautify
" and adorn your Profession; let all Men
" know that you are true Disciples of Christ,
" by your Love one to another ¹." 'Tis not a difficult Task to enlarge, when Love and Peace is the Theme; but as some have, perhaps, offered *too much* in it's Favour, I shall say the *less*; the Poet may launch forth in Tropes and Figures, and indulge a Luxuriancy of Fancy, while sounding it's Praises; the *Laudicean* too may bring Incense to it's Altars; but it will be our Business to try it's *real Value*, and settle the Homage *due* to it, by the Standard of Revelation, and Reason. I should not, I apprehend, be faithful, either to God or you, if I did not observe in Reference to Peace,

C

1st, That

¹ John xiii. 35.

10 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

1st, That it ought to be *genuine*, by Way of Opposition to it's various Counterfeits; the *Thing* and the *Name*, *should* go together; we ought not to embrace the *Shadow*, instead of the *Substance*; which must be the Case, whenever Stoical Stupidity, meer Formality, cold Indifferency, or designing Hypocrisy, is dignified with the Title of Peace, or a peaceable Conversation. You may also observe,

2^{dly}, That a pacific Course is not to be taken up *implicitly*, or at *all Adventures* ^t, *contrary* to the *Voice* of *Conscience*, the Rules of *Prudence*, or the *Word* of *God*; but whenever these three Witnesses concur in their Evidence, and prove it is your Duty to dwell in the Habitations of Peace, immediately retire from the Field, exchange the cruel Sword, for the peaceful Olive-Branch; resolving, *If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, to live peaceably with all Men* ^u. But once more, and,

3^{dly}, Peace is not to be purchased at the *Expence* of *Truth*; for as Gold may be bought too dear, so may Peace. We are commanded to love the Truth, and Peace ^x. We are to love *both*, but the Prophet gives Truth the Preference; Truth and Peace, God has here joined together, and really, *each* of them has *new* Charms, *additional* Beauties when found in Company with the other; but whenever Men dare to separate this amiable Couple, Peace must

^t See the Motto in the Title Page.

^x Zech. viii. 19.

^u Rom. xii. 18.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 11

must fall a Sacrifice to, or a Ransom for Truth. God, the *only* Lord, and *best* Guide of Conscience, having thus determined; saying, ^y *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.* Here we are exhorted, as one observes ^z, to prefer *nothing* to Truth; for that which is sold, is usually *less* valued, than the Price it's sold for; but Truth is not to be sold, because nothing *should* be esteemed equal to it's Purchase or Worth. A trimming and temporizing Behaviour, when Truth lies at Stake, is *hardly* reconcileable, with an Imitation of the Apostle *Paul's* Example, for his Word was not *Yea* and *Nay* ^a; no, his Doctrine was of a Piece, his Preaching was not *This* and *That* ^b: Nor does it correspond, with the Exhortation to *contend earnestly*, for the Faith once delivered to the Saints ^c. How strong, and emphatical is the Expression in the Original! It is a Metaphorical Term (as the Learned know) borrowed from Wrestlers, or Persons contending with the Agonies of Death. Does then the Wrestler exert himself to the utmost in his Exercises, or the dying Person struggle for Life? the *like* Fervour the Apostle recommends, in contending for the Faith once delivered to the Saints. Nor is an answerable Practice utterly inconsi-

C 2

stent

^y Prov. xxiii. 23.

^z Mr Pool. See Synop. Crit.

^a 2 Corinth. i. 18.

^b Apostolus Negat se ἐλαφρία χρίσασθαι, leuitate usum, & addit Sermonem suum non fuisse vai και ε. Vid. Grot. de Jur. Bell. &c. Lib. ii. Cap. 13. §. 21.

^c Jude 3. ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ πίσει, est eam bene tueri, non sinere sibi eripi. Pol. Syn.

12 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

stent with speaking the Truth in Love ^d. Thus, I apprehend, 'tis pretty plain, we are not thro' Treachery or Cowardice, for the Sake of imaginary Peace, to betray the Truth as it is in Jesus; especially if we close this Head with our Saviour's Declaration, ^e *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.* Once more,

4thly, Peace is not to be purchased at the Expence of Edification; the Improvement of immortal Creatures in the divine Life, was one of the many Ends Christ had in view, in entring on his publick Ministry, and this he esteemed so *very* important, that in Order to compass it, he opposed the Corruptions of the World in general, but especially the false and injurious Glosses of the Jewish Doctors. The Apostles too travelled in the Path, which their Lord had marked out by his own Example, disturbing the *dangerous* Tranquillity of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and at length became such notorious Incendiaries, that when *Paul* and *Silas* arrived at *Thessalonica*, the popular Cry was, *these that have turned the World upside down, are come hither also* ^f. Yet *PAUL* was no Friend to Sedition, but was aiming at their Edification; being sent, *to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darknes to Light, and from the*

^d *Ephes. iv. 15.*

^e *Mark viii. 38.*

^f *Acts xvii. 6.*

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 13

the Power of Satan, unto God; that they might receive the Forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance among them which are sanctified by Faith that is in Christ^s. And as edifying Views and Attempts were ungratefully branded in the Apostolic Age, and through the Depravity of Man, often produced Discord; so likewise the same has been the Case in later Ages. What a dreadful Noise and Bustle was there among the *German Princes*, when *Luther* and others (the Benefits of whose Zeal we now enjoy) lamenting the Loss, or Poverty of real Religion, and the Disadvantages Multitudes laboured under, ventured to *assault* and undermine the *pacific* Edifice, which the Ignorance, Superstition, and Impositions of *Rome*, had erected; and though the Protestants (edified by them) acknowledge their Obligations to them, and bless God for them, yet Papists censure, and curse them, for disturbing their Repose: But Thanks be to God, the Reformers were Proof against Anathema's and Flatteries, having a warm Desire *to save some*, and if it might be, many Brands from the Burning^h. The next Point which comes under Consideration, is,

III. The *encouraging Promise* contained in the Text, *the God of Love and Peace shall be with you*. These Words are a quickening Motive to the Practice of the several Branches of Duty before enjoined; for perhaps, as nothing
is

^s *Act*. xxvi. 18.

^h *1 Cor.* ix. 22.

14 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

is *more discouraging* to a Believer in any Pursuit, than *divine Desertion*; so, nothing is *more exciting*, than an *Assurance* of the *divine Presence*. This the Apostle seems sensible of, and therefore declares, (and God has not withdrawn, or disowned the Declaration) that the God of Love and Peace should be with them; *directing* them in all the Labyrinths, and Perplexities with which they might be entangled, *comforting* them under all their Tribulations, Oppositions, and Persecutions, *supporting* them under Temptations from Men or Devils, and *supplying* them with all necessary Grace, as an Earnest of *crowning* them, in the best Season, with immortal Glory.

The *A P P L I C A T I O N*.

1. From the foregoing Subject, we may infer, that the Ministers of Christ retain an affectionate Concern for the Prosperity and Welfare of their Converts, though at a Distance from them. The Apostle *Paul*, at the Time when He wrote this Epistle, is supposed to have been at *Philippi*, a City of *Macedonia*, yet his Heart was frequently at *Corinth*; such was his Attachment to *them*, whom God had given him as Seals to his Ministry. Distance cannot dissolve the mutual Regard between the Instrument of Conversion, and the Converted; the Ties and Attachments *thus* arising from Religion, are more
close

close and durable (I imagine) than those, which spring from natural Affection, or any Obligations of a civil Kind; for the Apostle bears his *Galatian* Converts Record, *that if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own Eyes, and have given them to him*ⁱ, and the Apostles Affection to his *Galatian* and *Corinthian* Brethren, &c. was manifested in his Attention to their Circumstances, Concern for their Welfare, and dispatching Messages and Advices, suited to their respective Conditions, whether prosperous or adverse, bright or gloomy. Methinks we may infer too, from the Circumstances of the *Corinthian* Church, as implied in our Text.

2dly, That Converts to Christ Jesus, may meet with many Discouragements and Difficulties, before they arrive at a Meetness for Heaven. Storms and Tempests frequently attend them, who are sailing to the celestial Haven. Believers are not *usually* made perfect, till after they have *suffered awhile*^k, *they have therefore need of Patience; that after they have done the Will of God, they might receive the Promise*^l. Though young Converts are apt to imagine, could they but conquer this particular Lust, or obtain the Removal of that particular Temptation, their Difficulties and Trials would be at an End; yet they plainly discover at Length, that one Evil removes, as if only to make Way for another; and they only

ⁱ *Gal.* iv. 15.

^k *1 Pet.* v. 10.

^l *Heb.* x. 36.

16 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

only shift their Trials, for still *sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof*^m. As the *Israelites* upon their quitting *Ægypt*, had the Hardships and Toils, and Oppositions of the Wilderness to encounter, before they arrived at *Canaan*; in the like Manner they, who are delivered from the Bondage of Sin and Satan, and have once girt on the Christian Armour, must travel in a military Posture, contending with a Succession of Difficulties, till by the Order of the great Captain of our Salvation, Death sounds a desirable and everlasting Retreat; for there's *no other* Discharge for a Christian Soldier.—Sin and Satan will disturb, and distress, where they can't destroy, as the *Corinthian* Converts discovered, and experienced, and *PAUL* expected, and therefore sent them the Exhortations in our Text, and kindly prepared the supporting and reviving Cordial at the Close of it; viz. *the God of Love and Peace shall be with you*. But this Subject may be further applied

2dly, By Way of Enquiry. And as I apprehend the Deceased had an Eye to the Feuds and unhappy Divisions reigning in this Town, when he fixed on the Words first read, the following Enquiries will be adapted to his Intentions. And as there's a melancholy Resemblance, between the *Corinthian* Circumstances, and yours, let each of us, solemnly propose

^m *Matth. vi. 34.*

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 17

propose the following Question, to his own Soul, *viz.*

1. How far have I been accessary to the Distractions, Distresses, and Divisions of the present Day? Instead of turning the Edge of our Censure against others, let us reflect with the utmost Severity upon ourselves. Can't we read, in our own Conduct, the Cause of the common Calamity? Oh my Soul! may each say, has not *thy* Lukewarmness and Indifference to God, to the Redeemer, to his Ordinances, to his Saints; Oh my Soul! has not *thy* Carelessness, both as to Faith and Practice, in Relation to God and Man; has not *thy* Barrenness, though enjoying the Means of Grace and Growth, together with *thine* heinous, and ungrateful Backslidings, paved the Way to present Afflictions? Oh my Soul! has not *thine* Unbelief and Distrust, *thine* Omission or lifeless Performance of Duties, together with *thine* unguarded Behaviour, helped to bring on these distracting Evils? What, my Soul! will a jealous God suffer *thine* Idolatry, *thy* Carnality, *thine* Hypocrisy, *Pride*, *Ingratitude*, and *Selfishness*, to pass unchastized? May not God justly visit for these Things? After such serious Expostulations with our own Souls, may we not upon full and clear Conviction, confess ingenuously with *Joseph's* Brethren, *that we are verily guilty*ⁿ? This Head shall be closed

D

with

ⁿ Gen. xlii. 21.

18 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

with an Allusion to our Saviour's Words, ° *He that is without Sin, let him cast the first Stone.* Another seasonable Head of Enquiry may be,

2dly, How are these desolating Evils complained of, to be redressed? May we not take up the Prophet's mournful Notes, ° *by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small; I am, Brethren, jealous over you, and I hope with a Godly Jealousy; I am afraid real vital Religion is at a very low Ebb, with many of you, who are Heads of Families; and how slender is the Hope, that the rising Generation will improve, and exceed their Ancestors, in true Godliness, when those who should form their tender Minds, are so much unacquainted with real Religion themselves; as to spend their Time, and waste their Spirits, in religious Disputes, and unprofitable Wrangling.—— Is it not every one's Duty to exert himself in the best Manner he possibly can, to extinguish the Fire of Contention now flaming? Are any of us unmoved with the deplorable Circumstances of Religion in this Place, let them read, and read with close Attention, and personal Application, the following awful Denunciation; *Wo to them that are at Ease in Zion, &c. that lie upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the Stall; that chant to the*
Sound*

° *John viii. 7.*

° *Amos vii. 2.*

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 19

Sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick, like David; that drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments, but they are not grieved for the Afflictions of Joseph^q. Well, thus you see the Woe which attends the unaffected, and you may next view the Doom of the inactive, or those who attempt nothing towards serving the Cause, and Interest of God, ^r *Curse ye, Meroz, (said the Angel of the Lord) curse ye bitterly the Inhabitants thereof; but why are they to be cursed bitterly? You are presently told, 'twas because they came not to the Help of the Lord, to the Help of the Lord against the Mighty.* Must the Cause of God, the Cause of real Religion, lie panting, bleeding, dying amongst you, none lamenting it's wretched State, none appearing for it's Relief and Assistance? If there's any that can look with indifferent Eyes, upon the Circumstances of Religion, amongst you, I know who cannot; and I'll take this Opportunity, to declare freely, and solemnly, that the Distractions of *Ringwood*, since my Departure from it, have so constantly, and deeply afflicted my Soul, that I have frequently expected to be swallowed up of over much Sorrow. Brethren, I heartily wish for your Harmony, and Prosperity in the best things, and should rejoice could I be the happy Instrument of directing to both. But how desirable soever

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Peace

^q *Amos vi. 1, 4, 5, 6.*

^r *Judges v. 23.*

20 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

Peace and Concord may be, I despair of seeing it restored, till *Love unfeigned*, and a *Spirit of Supplication*, together with *mutual Forbearance*, and *mutual Confidence*, is poured out from on high.—Again, as for the Divisions of *Reuben*, there were great Searchings of Heart^f, so let us continue our Enquiries, and let each of us, as in the Presence of God, put another solemn Question to our own Souls; which is

3dly, Am I a Mourner in *Zion*? Do I in secret bewail the melancholy Circumstances of the Church of Christ in this Place? Do I ever spread the Jealousies, Animosities, and Contentions, now reigning before God, with an aching Heart and flowing Eyes? Are my generous, and public-spirited Tears, likely to be any Ways available, towards quenching the Fire of Contention, which threatens to consume the Life and Power of Godliness amongst us? Has my Heart ever trembled for the *Ark*, like good old *Eli*'s? Who supported the Death of his two Sons, but could not survive the Loss of Captivity of the *Ark*; but presently gave up the Ghost, upon hearing that the Glory was departed from *Israel*^t? Let us now attempt the further Improvement of this Subject, by way

3dly, Of Exhortation; and, I beseech you, Brethren, that, as you value the *Credit of Religion*, your own *Profit*, or the *Interest of the rising*

^f *Judges v. 16.*

^t *1 Sam. iv. 18, &c.*

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 21

rising Generation, you would candidly suffer the Word of Exhortation.

1st, Then let us all pay a sacred Deference, to the Injunctions of our Text, and study the Things which make for Peace, and mutual Edification; this might be urged upon you, who stood in a natural, or civil Relation to the Deceased, but I can only add now, ^u *That it is good and pleasant for Brethren to dwell together in Unity* ^x. But as to others, who were related to him on a religious Account; let us all remember the Advice of a dying Man; labouring to be of one Mind, and, if possible, to live in Peace. Take especial Care, that there be not more of the Man than the Christian, in your contentious Proceedings; *For the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God* ^y. Let us mutually check our angry Passions, in their first Motions, *For the Beginning of Strife, is as when one letteth out Water, therefore leave off Contention before it be meddled with* ^z. The Man that does you an Injury, calls for your Pity, more than your Fury.—*Learn to speak the Truth in Love* ^a. And let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even

^u As the Omission does not affect the main Drift of the Discourse, I shall not insert what was recommended to the Relatives from the Pulpit.

^x Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

^y James i. 20.

^z Prov. xvii. 14.

^a Ephes. iv. 15.

22 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you^b. To close this Head, you remember that God was neither in the stormy Wind, nor the Convulsions of the Earthquake, nor in the devouring Fire^c; no, for God, as the Apostle acquaints us, *Is a God of Love and Peace*. Again,

2dly, Let the contentious Discouragements of the present State excite us to long, and prepare, for the Worlds of Harmony, Peace, and Love. Though our mutual Prejudices are now strong, and our Jars frequent, yet in a few more Days our Dust shall be lodged in the silent Grave, there to remain in friendly Tranquillity, 'till the Judgment-Day; when the Saints (how great soever their Discords here) will meet each other with chearful, and cordial Embraces. Oh, how pleasing, yet, alas, how distant, is the Prospect! And because distant, you find the Psalmist crying, *Oh, that I had Wings like a Dove, for then I would fly away, and be at Rest; I would hasten my Escape from the windy Storm, and Tempest*^d. And in another Place, you meet him lamenting his tumultuous Situation; *Woe is me, says he, that I sojourn in Mesek, that I dwell in the Tents of Kedar. My Soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth Peace; I am for Peace, but when I speak they are for War*^e. This World you see has been, and you know now is

^b *Ephes.* iv. 31, 32. ^c *1 Kings* xix. 11, 12. ^d *Psalms* lv. 6, 8. ^e *Psalms* cxx. 5, 6, 7.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 23

is attended with various Difficulties, and Discouragements; *Wherefore, seeing we are encompassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience, and Expedition, the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God; for, consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your Minds*^f. Moreover,

3dly, Let us all pray for the Peace and Prosperity of *Jerusalem*. This Duty is clearly recommended, and strongly enforced by the Example and Advice of the Psalmist, *Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee; Peace be within thy Walls, and Prosperity within thy Palaces. For my Brethren and Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee, because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good*. If the present Troubles of the Church suitably affect us, they will be seriously spread before God in our daily Addresses; though *private Cases* may escape our Memory, the Circumstances of the Church will not be forgotten, as may be inferred from the Psalmist's Declaration; ^h *If I forget thee,*
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^f *Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3.*

^h *Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.*

^g *Psalm cxxii. 6, 7, &c.*

24 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

Oh Jerusalem, let my Right Hand forget her Cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief Joy. Was there more wrestling with God, there would be less Contention with Man. I am unwilling to conclude, till I have hinted a few Words by Way

4thly, Of Consolation, which are directed to them, who in secret lament the unhappy Distractions, Animosities, and Declensions visible amongst you. Such are ready to cry out, Oh that the Salvation of Israel were come out of Zionⁱ; well, in Answer to their Requests and Tears, the Time will come, When the Lord will bring back the Captivity of his People, and then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad; for though many are the Devices in a Man's Heart, the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand^k. And when the Time to favour her, yea the set Time is come, then will the Lord arise and have Mercy upon Zion^l. Remember too, for your Encouragement, that Christ is Head over all Things to the Church^m: The Stars are in his Right Handⁿ, he directs them at Pleasure, and supplies them at Discretion, for when he ascended up on High, he not only led Captivity Captive, but gave Gifts unto Men. And he gave some Pastors and Teachers for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the

ⁱ Psalm xiv. 7.

^k Prov. xix. 21.

^l Psal. cii. 13.

^m Ephes. i. 22.

ⁿ Rev. ii. 1.

A Plea for Peace, and Truth. 25

the Ministry, for the edifying the Body of Christ °. You may be unable to point out the Means of concluding Zion's Afflictions, but do not despair of it's Relief, for the Earth helped the Woman °. Though your Lamentations for Zion may be unobserved by Mortals, yet God will treasure up your Tears, and kindly distinguish you in a Day of Tryal, for God gave particular Charge, That a Mark should be set on the Foreheads of the Men that sighed and cried for all the Abominations of Jerusalem °. How dark and gloomy soever the present Face of Things may appear, it is Christ's Business and Concern, To appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give them Beauty for Ashes, the Oil of Joy for Mourning, and the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness °. For though Weeping may endure for Night, Joy cometh in the Morning °; and perhaps when little expected; For Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. But though Faith may be weak, God's Love is strong; therefore it is added, Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the Palms of my Hands, thy Walls are continually before me °. Having thus shewn you that the Consolations

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° Ephes. iv. 8, 11, 12.
ix. 4. ° Isaiah lxi. 3.
xlix. 14, 15, 16.

° Revel. xii. 16.
° Psal. xxx. 5.

° Ezek.
° Isaiah

26 *A Plea for Peace, and Truth.*

of God are neither few or small, it remains that I dismiss you with the Words of the Apostle, ^u *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things. Amen.*

^u *Philip. iv. 8.*



F I N I S.